

CELEBRATING AND COMMEMORATING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WILSON of Ohio). The gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. I thank the Speaker very much. Might I say I thank the Speaker for his leadership and certainly his patience this evening.

We have spent the last 4 days in many of our Congressional districts celebrating and commemorating the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, and as many of us have participated for almost 3 days as we went home for the weekend, these commemorations have become more than celebrations and the kinds of actions that take place when a holiday allows one to commemorate.

As I listened to my good friends across the aisle, one would wonder if I am now going to again recount the great legacy of Dr. King, as my good friend and colleague, JOHN LEWIS, who has an enormous history with the movement and is certainly our conscience, passed a suspension bill on the floor today, one that he authored, in tribute to Dr. King and in recognition of his 78th birthday.

But in this time, I wish to suggest that Dr. King's legacy is really a living document and a living legacy, so I want to weave the message that Dr. King left for America and the world throughout the changes that I believe are key to where we are today.

As I listened to my friends speak about the advancing bill that will deal with energy reform, let me just say that coming from Houston, I happen to be the Congressperson that represents one of the largest areas, we call it the energy capital of the world. I practiced oil and gas law for 15-plus years before coming to the United States Congress, and I have in many instances supported and will continue to support the growth, the positive growth and the continued development of a very important industry in this country.

In fact, it should be known that as I got elected to Congress one of the first acts that I worked on with former President Clinton was to assess the issue of royalty relief for the industry, at that time of course suffering from low development, low prices, and which needed an economic engine, if you will. So rather than look at the next step that the Democratic leadership wants us to take as undermining the industry, we should look at it as an opportunity for expanding on the term "energy."

One would say, how does this weave into the life and legacy of Martin King? Martin King was a dreamer and also an activist, and he wanted for Americans, all of us, of all races, of all religions, of all beliefs, a better quality of life. So I believe that tomorrow and Thursday when we have an opportunity to present this bill on the floor of the House, it will be an opportunity to

look at alternative fuels, renewable fuels, new ideas, but at the same time it will give many of us an opportunity to plant seeds of friendship and relationships with this energy industry that all of us want to become an independent industry and an independent America.

So, I look forward to the debate on the floor of the House in the tradition of Dr. King, who dreams for a better quality of life. Let us look at a new direction as we look to the opportunities for energy investment in the Gulf, which many of us supported in the last Congress. Let us give this initiative a chance of reforming or looking to an investment in alternatives and renewables. Might I say to my friends who are in the regions of oil and gas exploration, believe me, there is much room for your technology and expertise in renewables and alternatives.

I wanted to just comment on my good friends, as I begin to discuss where we are in Martin Luther King's dream. We all need dreamers. In fact, I would consider President John F. Kennedy the main Camelot of America. I would consider Americans wanting his dream to come true, his dream of a new and vibrant America, his dream of a youthful America, his dream of going to space, his dream of a peaceful America. So there are many dreamers.

But the question is, do we take the dreams and the message that those dreamers give us and now provide the activism that would cause America to have a better quality of life?

I think of our Constitution. In essence, as the Founding Fathers begin to deliberate on what kind of nation they wanted America to be, they were dreamers, because in fact they didn't know an America of the 21st century. They didn't know America as richly diverse as we have today.

But when they organized in the Constitutional Convention this document that now provides a very effective road map of democracy, they started out as follows: "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, ensure domestic Tranquility provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

This is the very Constitution that Dr. King vested himself in, the 13th and 14th and 15th amendments. So he answered the call of Rosa Parks in the mid-1950s, because he had an idea that our Constitution was not working. Was there actually equality or due process as the 14th amendment would suggest? Were we as colored people, Negroes, truly free, as the 13th amendment might suggest?

I think Dr. King in his theological wisdom and his intellect probably recognized that this was not a free nation. So he accepted the call of Rosa Parks to question why free people could not sit anywhere they wanted in public

modes of transportation. Many people consider the Montgomery bus boycott, and they used the terminology "bus" because it was a bus. But it was symbolic of the dividing line of color in America.

So Dr. King was very eloquent in his words, that he wanted to make sure that the dream of freedom, the more perfect union, was one that we could accept as a reality.

I want to acknowledge the King family. His children, Yolanda, and Martin, III, Dexter, Bernice; his wonderful, wonderful wife, of which I had the privilege of having a beautiful friendship, relationship, as she befriended women across America. This strong, regal woman, who after the death of her husband, a widow with four children, she was not going to let his dream die, and then organized the Martin Luther King Center in Atlanta, the memorial, the tribute to his works. The King family, Dr. King's family, Daddy King, and his mother. And the Ebenezer Baptist Church that still stands and has the legacy of the King family, and the tragic loss of his mother, doing what she loves best, playing in the church.

No one pays attention to the comprehensiveness of the life of the King family and their commitment to public service and the tragedies that have befallen them, but this weekend and this past day, in remembering what they stood for, should catapult us, propel America, into doing better.

That is why I am so proud that Democrats have weaved into their message of a new direction the understanding of the values of Martin King, Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams, Benjamin Franklin, individuals who would not have known where we would be in this 21st century, but would have hoped for a wonderful and valiant America.

Alexander Hamilton, for example, charged us with the responsibility of not letting our democracy age as the paper upon which it was written, but he reminded us in 1775 that "the sacred rights of mankind are not to be rummaged for among old parchments or musty records. They are written as with a sunbeam in the whole volume of human nature by the hand of divinity itself, and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power."

As I talk about Dr. King, I must reflect on Guantanamo Bay or Abu Ghraib or where we are today in the Iraq war. You see, we are not isolated to view Dr. King simply as a holiday, a Federal holiday, or "that civil rights leader," or the man who had this wonderful oratory and spoke eloquently in August of 1963, in the March on Washington. That is not all that his legacy should leave us. In fact, he too has provided a road map of which I am most saddened that we seemingly have left its pathway.

As I started to say, I am grateful in this new election when America spoke volumes of what changes they wanted

to see. We have the kind of leadership that is not turning a deaf ear to the voice of America. And Americans, if I might speak that you might hear, do not count your vote as your final word and say. You, too, are America.

□ 2200

As we proceed in this very new and exciting time of listening to you, so much so that we committed ourselves to the first 100 hours, and in that 100 hours, you can now look to see that we have reformed the lobbying debacle that we experienced in the last couple of Congresses, we now realize that we must reform ourselves. We passed that legislation limiting the intrusion of lobbyists and recognizing that there should be restraints that close the door to special interests but open the doors to America. That was the dream of Martin King.

Then, of course, we moved on to ensure that as we all fell to our knees during 9/11, as we saw the throngs of so many die, and made a commitment as we sang "God Bless America" on the very steps of this United States Capitol, Democrats and Republicans, we made a commitment to the fallen. We made a commitment to those mourning families. We made a commitment after the 9/11 Commission had finished its work to finish the job on homeland security.

But for Congress after Congress, we could not pass simple tasks such as inspections of airline cargo and a number of other funding needs for our first responders, our firefighters and our police persons, and we are still working on interoperability and looking to do better things with rail security and highway security.

We could not get it done; but in this new Congress, that took the dream of a dream of a better quality of life of Dr. King, we made his message a reality, passing the 9/11 Commission report.

We moved on to something that in all actuality, Mr. Speaker, really brought tears to my eyes. I have been here 12 years, and I have never served in the majority, frustration of the Medicare prescription drug benefit vote, and the vote on the war, and the vote on over and over again of rejecting hate crime legislation. Nothing extraordinary, Mr. Speaker, just legislation that would indicate that simply we would not tolerate hateful acts against people because of their difference. I sat in painful hearings listening to people denigrate hate crimes legislation, just a simple addition, having come from the State that saw a man decapitated just a few years ago in Jasper, Texas, because of the color of his skin.

I felt that pain of not getting legislation passed, and yet I believe it was last Wednesday we cast a vote for the minimum wage, an overwhelming vote, and I applaud my colleagues from both sides of the aisle.

Tears came to my eyes because I have to go back to a restaurant where a waitress stopped me. Well, sometimes

we do not give America much credit for all the knowledge that they have. I enjoy being out listening to my constituents. They are so instructive, and this waitress just stopped me while she was putting the food there on the steam table. Those of you know we get good Southern food at the steam table. And so she stopped me and said are we going to get an increase in the minimum wage. That vote last week, reflective of the message of Dr. King, acting on his dream, gave us that opportunity.

We moved on, of course, to cast a number of other votes that would see improvement in the lives of Americans.

This week we have the opportunity as well to address the piercing interest rates on our college students. We have always prided ourselves on believing in equality of education. It was an equalizer for immigrants in the early 1900s, as it is today, certainly for minorities, women, African Americans who started off as second-class citizens. You always had their parents telling you, get an education, but yet these spiraling interest rates, and we are getting ready to cut it in half. What an inspiration to be able to focus on that.

So I want to acknowledge our vice-chair, JOHN LARSON, who many people do not know is a lover of history but also a protector of history and helped to introduce the Amistad slave ship to the rest of America. These are the new direction leaders.

RAHM EMANUEL who economically is one who helped guide the Clinton administration but helped to frame our debate on Medicare, and we know his sensitivity to these issues.

JIM CLYBURN, who always provides a steady compass of morality, who recognizes we were a divided America, and now is in a position to be a healer with his words and his actions.

Of course, our majority leader who has an early history in civil rights and is certainly someone who is grounded in the leadership direction that we should be taking in this Congress.

And of course, our Speaker, NANCY PELOSI, symbolically and in reality exudes Dr. King's dream for I know that he would be comforted in his 78th year that maybe America has listened.

This is the leadership team that I think will carry forth this dream, and as I participated in events over the weekend, the silent march organized by councilmember Ada Edwards that saw almost 5,000 people marching silently, the mayor of Houston and others who were there, an overwhelming experience, and then, of course, to commemorate and celebrate with our working men and women. The AFL-CIO national organization was in Houston celebrating the weekend with many, many union heads, including Richard Trumka and Richard Womack and Clayola Brown, locally John Bland and Richard Shaw and Claude Cummings and many others, along with President Little of the Transit Workers Union, and they were out and about serving,

commemorating Dr. King's dreams, serving. We worshipped together with Reverend Sharpton on Sunday morning, and then we reflected in a breakfast on Monday morning, reflections of the past and dreams of the future by the North Houston Frontiers Club.

I am sure these kinds of events were in our communities all over. And why did we have them? Why do people do this? Why is that it on that day we try to find people that do not look like us and embrace them? Why is it a day that we speak of love and unity and harmony? What is it about this man called King?

Certainly during his lifetime he agitated quite a few, so much so that we can find him in any number of compromising positions. I hold this up. We can see law enforcement, with his hands shackled behind his back, and of course, again, being taken off to jail. This is the predicament that Dr. King would find himself in quite often. He even got sent to jail and wanted to insist that no one let him out, but they would bond him out anonymously so they could get him out of town; but Dr. King knew that if he did not suffer with those who likewise displayed a nonviolent protest, his message could not prevail.

Dr. King saw the likes of dogs and hoses going after American citizens who simply wanted to have a sense of equality.

He was found in many places, and I think that is why people stop on that day, and even as we sing over and over again, we shall overcome, tears come to the eyes of white clergy, young Hispanic men and women, Muslims, Protestants, those of the Jewish faith who were very much part of this ongoing movement, the labor movement, African Americans, religious beliefs of all kinds. They stopped for a moment, those who are sincere and believe in this great message.

So this picture that reflects the marchers who would not stop going past the sign that reads "Citizens Council, States Rights, Racial Integrity," which was a sign of a racial purity group of those who believed that there was inequality, in fact, superiority of one group over another.

□ 2210

That is not the New Direction Congress, and so frankly I believe that more than ever Dr. King's dream brings about a reality.

Now, let me tell you why I think we can use some of his writings for where we need to go next. As we all know, we are continuing the 100 hours with a cut in the student interest rates. Just last week, as I indicated, we did a number of reform measures, including fixing the Medicare Prescription part D. And, Mr. Speaker, you haven't lived until you live through a 6-hour vote when the clock stays open for 6 hours, not during the day but starting from 12 a.m. until 6 in the morning. You haven't lived until you are sort of circling this august place trying to talk,

if you will, sense in Members about who will you be hurting if you deny us the right to negotiate a lower price, who will you be hurting if you put a doughnut hole? Just the concept of it. You are going along and everybody knows these, if you will, holes in the streets, whether they are cavities that fall in because the street is not built right or either these utility areas here, everybody has had or not had, but imagine the unpleasant experience of your car going down a sink hole. You usually can't get out on your own. It is usually unexpected. To think that in that Medicare part D vote we voted not to negotiate cheaper prices and to allow our seniors to go into a sink hole. But with Dr. King's message and the New Direction Congress, we voted on Friday to reform that, at least to allow the negotiating of lower prices. And, of course, there were all kinds of naysayers; the veterans would suffer and others. And, Mr. Speaker, you know we know better. We know how strong we have been on veterans, and, frankly, we know that we will have vehicles in which that we will make sure that it is a fair and balanced initiative.

Let me tell you why I think that we have utilized the map that Dr. King left, and I take first of all to cite that point is his letter from a Birmingham jail. And I want everyone who has thought for a moment, "I can't press the envelope on this." It may be that you are in a place of employment, that you have got a better way to do something and you just can't move to get to the boss' door, you are just a little intimidated. Or your fellow workers are saying, "You know, you had better not go there. You know how they are." It takes a sense of courage to go against the tide when you know that some ill can befall you. So to America, we need some Dr. Kings. We need people who are willing nonviolently or with a word or pen to go against the grain. America needs that kind of inspiration again.

And I just want to remind you, it is hard when you are a man of the cloth. Your friends are the clergy. They are rabbis, they are priests, they are Protestant ministers, they are deacons and deaconesses. These are your contemporaries and your friends. Dr. King got into the Birmingham jail. And it is lonely enough in jail. I can certainly tell you and know that people who have protested nonviolently and wind up in jail, it is a lonely place. You may have an idea that you are going to get out, but you begin to think of all kinds of loneliness, and are you sure they are going to let you out? Are you sure they are going to come and get you? Dr. King found himself in a Birmingham jail at the hands of Bull Connor; but, more importantly, the clergy of America thought it was important to just address him, or I would say dress him down. They thought it was important to tell him that, you know, you are a clergy and we are a little sensitive that you are getting out of hand. You are an outside agitator. You are disrupting

things. The business community in Birmingham, they don't want you here. There is nothing more devastating or impacting than your colleagues, your clergy, those you hang out with giving no comfort to what you are doing or telling you to just go away. And that is what they did with a signed letter in the New York Times and in the papers across America, that you are really being a trouble maker.

And you know how we are with our human emotions. The normal response would have been a harsh letter and more to come: How dare you write to me sitting in a jail in Birmingham that was probably one of the longer stays that Dr. King had?

But he took time to introduce himself to America by saying: You may not know, but I am President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in the letter that he wrote. You may not be aware that we have 85 affiliated organizations across the South, and one of them is the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. And, by the way, they invited me here to Alabama.

He mentioned that he came because his staff asked him to come. But then he got into the source of his inspiration, and he used it from a biblical perspective. So allow me just to say these words from his letter. He answered the clergy with their own scriptures. How many times do we do that? We are more apt to be able to write that insulting letter. It is hard for us to write an educating letter, a letter that is calming and peaceful. And Dr. King said:

But, more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their thus saith the Lord far beyond the boundaries of their hometowns, and just as Apostle Paul left the village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own hometown. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

Now, I am not reading a Christian interpretation for those who may be Muslim or other faiths or agnostic. What I am reading is a secular usage of his response to the clergy who said you need get out of there. You are an outside agitator. What he said is, is that I have got to go and help to bring freedom where there is a need for me to bring help.

So my challenge to my colleagues as Dr. King's birthday passes on for another year and we go on about our normal duties, are we going to be the kind of Congress that renders aid and solves problems as we move into the formulation and the reform of Leave No Child Behind? I don't believe there is one Member who cannot recount a story where their schools are crying for relief, whether it is to give teachers more freedom in teaching, whether it is to

give low performing schools the right kind of funding. We couldn't do that in the last Congress. We passed Leave No Child Behind. We had good intentions. But there were no dollars going to the schools to help them be fixed. So, for example, in Houston, TX our school boards felt obligated to close schools. And I hope that we will put school boards in a position that they will choose courageously to render aid to schools.

There are many school districts who can be proud of their records. I believe that we have a number of proud moments in the Houston independent school districts at All Dean Klein, Cypress Springs, North Forest Independent School District. Of course we have proud moments. But there are moments when we should be ashamed of what we are doing to our children; poor equipment, boxing them in so their educational desires are stifled, overtesting them.

So I hope that this Congress will answer the Macedonian call, listen to our teachers. I hope we will bring them in in throngs. Let us listen to school children, let us listen to parents, the PTOs, the PTAs, how do we get a better educational system in America that balances out the excellence that we believe we derive from charter schools and private schools? Because I believe a Nation that dooms its public schools dooms its heritage and its legacy.

□ 2220

Dr. King asked us to render aid, and that is important as we look to the many needs that we have.

If we are to do a better job, then it is clear that we must develop a country that provides employment for all Americans, and weave into that, we have to address the question of keeping jobs here in America. Let me remind you that Dr. King lost his life in Memphis, Tennessee on April 4, 1968. And if your history is a little rusty, he wasn't there for providing opportunities to sit in the front of the bus or sleep in a hotel, he was there about jobs. He was there about the dignity of jobs. He was there because a labor union was organizing the garage workers, and they were not sanitation workers, they were garbage workers, treated like garbage. He went there for full employment so working people could have the dignity of their work.

We as Members of Congress must invest in America, whether it be her technology, science, math, so that we can be at the cutting edge of job creation in this century. What does that mean? Some would say, Did Dr. King speak about research and innovativeness? Well, I think he laid out a road map. Remember, I said he was a dreamer.

We have to start putting more dollars into basic science and research and math. We need to be developing in our Nation more mathematicians and inventors. Where is the massive investment we failed to get out of this administration into research and science?

Where are our Ph.D.s, our physicists, our chemists, our biologists? Where are the quality laboratories in our universities? Where are the partnerships between universities and the Federal Government?

Let us be reminded that it is well known that the Defense Department was probably at the cutting edge of the Internet 30 or so years ago. And so what are we doing by draining this Nation of all of its resources and not putting back into it so that 10-20 years from now, we can look to the new physicists to challenge the creativities of the last century, the Alexander Bells and others, who put us on the then-technological map with the telephone.

Dr. King dreamed of an equal and free and just America, but he wanted to make sure that as we created that opportunity, the creative juices of America would certainly run free. Dr. King cannot be isolated in a box of civil rights. We as Members of Congress can use that dream to implement a better quality of life; and in basic research and science and technology, we have failed. We are flat-leveled. We have got to do a better job of finding those young mathematicians.

That's why I hope in the reform of Leave No Child Behind, you can have a mathematical genius, they score high on the math test, but that little one may have trouble spelling. It is just the way we are. We are all different. We have to find a way to reform the educational system that has the opportunity for that young mathematician to block and work with the spelling so they are not held back. We have to address the question of 10th graders and 11th graders failing tests or having grades of Bs or C-minuses so they can graduate, but that last test, as a senior they leave and they don't come back so they don't get even a GED.

We have to find a way to make an educational system that is accountable, but it must be as Martin's dream has offered to us and as Martin's words on April 3, 1968 offered to us, he had seen the promised land and he really believed America had the ability to get to the promised land for all Americans. So when we look at the reform or the reauthorization of Leave No Child Behind, let us be reminded that Dr. King gave us a road map. He gave us the "I Have a Dream" speech, and I always like to remind everyone of that thrilling experience, 250,000, the largest march ever in our history at that time in Washington, D.C., and what I found most thrilling as a little girl was the array of diversity. We talk about diversity now. That is our new lingo. But 1963. And the pride of the people who were there. I am from California, I am from Illinois, I am from Texas, I'm from Georgia. Everybody had on their State hats or State insignia. Young people, people in wheelchairs, veterans. What an experience. What an experience.

And then to be between the Lincoln Monument, the Washington Monu-

ment, to be able to be on the steps of the Lincoln Monument, what a magnificent statement to America that we should never forget.

I don't want to sound unrealistic. I know how holidays are given to us and they are one day. But I thought I would come to the floor tonight so that if anyone gleaned anything from what I am saying, it is that holidays are given for purposes, for lives, for reason. We commemorate President's Day because we are grateful to George Washington and Abraham Lincoln for the historic role that they played in America. George Washington, who guided us through the Revolutionary War and said we will stand. And Abraham Lincoln, for whatever his reasons as we have analyzed and critiqued about whether he was freeing the slaves or unifying the Union, he understood the death of soldiers and brother against brother. So we honor him because whatever happened, we stayed unified as a Union. That's why we have these holidays, so we can live again and again the value of our history.

That's why we advocated and pushed and JOHN CONYERS offered the legislation on Martin Luther King Holiday, not for the fact that he was good then but so people could recycle what he stood for.

I think now we have really, Mr. Speaker, lost our way. We have clearly not been able to capture all of the dream of Dr. King. So I would like to bring us almost full circle in terms of where we are today in the 21st century.

This war in Iraq goes against all that Dr. King tried to convince us of in his commitment to nonviolence. Of course when I begin to speak of this issue of nonviolence, I know what I will get from most Americans and many of my colleagues, and certainly my friends on the other side of the aisle, particularly as I try to segue into this discussion on Iraq. They will tell me this is a post-9/11 world. Mr. Speaker, I understand that. You can be assured that every single American understands that, and they want us to secure America. I don't reject that responsibility.

But what I do say is we can take some of the teachings of Dr. King and maybe we would be better off as we look for a new direction to craft a legislative response, a courageous legislative response, that would begin to reemploy our troops and to find a better way. Remember now, we are not isolated in our leadership. We are viewed as the most powerful Nation in the world. What does that mean? Conflicts around the world will look to us for relief: Sudan, South and North Korea, the changes in South America. They will look to this Nation for its guidance, and a Nation that is bogged down in an unceasing conflict where any one of us could account for you that we have had measuring sticks of success.

I did not vote for the war, but I am not going to take away from that that, one, we invaded Iraq. Saddam is not there. We can debate that question. I

would be happy to debate it. There was a democratic election. I will not take away from those benchmarks.

□ 2230

But what I will say, as I would expect my good friend and colleague in the Senate, the other body, who served in the Reagan administration and who understands these issues, as many of my colleagues do firsthand, Senator WEBB, I know that we are not denigrating things that have occurred. We won't deny that. But what we are saying is, is there not a better way? Is there not now time to turn the corner?

Are we advancing any progress for Iraq or this Nation or the world with the mounting death, now 3,000-plus Americans, moving up from 25,000 maimed? And might I say, Mr. Speaker, we have returning Iraqi vets that don't have jobs who are in our communities and asking what happened to the work.

By the way, I hope we will quickly pass the new GI Bill of Rights. I have had these people stop me in my community; and as mothers typically do, which I am, though I certainly act congressional, but tears well up in me that I have to have a veteran ask me what about a job or what about going to college. We are not prepared for these veterans. We say we are. We are making more of them, many of them maimed and needing to be retrained, and we are saying we are not ready. We are saying some of our hospitals don't have enough beds.

Dr. King, in his Birmingham speech, again, talked to the clergy about why you may well ask why direct action. Because, as you well know, there was protest and petitions. Why sit-ins, marches and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path? You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Non-violent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such attention that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue it seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored.

Now, why am I citing this? Because of course I would imagine you would not think I am talking about direct action in Iraq, but what I am saying is that there are many ways to get factions to the table other than the bloody violence and the presence of our soldiers on the soil of Iraq, at least as they are now being used. Is this misdirected, Mr. Speaker? We are not bringing anyone to the table of negotiation, not with the constant violence, the constant maiming of our soldiers, and the constant fueling the fire of sectarian violence.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I need tell no one of the enormous tragedy that we experienced today. I can't cite for you the numbers, but the U.N. now says that 34,000 Iraqis have died. The headline: "Suicide Bombings Go on as U.N. Says 2006 Dead in Iraq Top 34,000." The

United Nations said 34,452 Iraqi civilians had been killed in sectarian violence in 2006.

This is not insurgents or al Qaeda coming across the border. These are Iraqi civilians caught up in sectarian violence. We have not been able to stop it. This is a terrible day today. We have over 100 today that have died. Over 100.

So when we begin to try and resolve this question of Iraq, can we not put in place serious diplomatic negotiations? Can we not work in a bipartisan manner? Can we not suggest that we have done enough to warrant the Prime Minister at the table along with Sunni leaders? Can we ask the Prime Minister not to be so singular in his viewpoints? Do you expect, with his relationship with the cleric, that he would in any way provide the kind of necessary commitment that we have been told by this administration will be required for the Baghdad policy to work, dividing Baghdad into nine districts, forcing our soldiers, 20,000-plus, into neighborhoods, dragging people out of their neighborhoods when the bombing that occurred today occurred at the end of al Sadr, the city? The largest and one of the most egregious horrific bombings and we are to expect that our soldiers will be able to be in the midst?

Oh, yes, I have the greatest faith in our young men and women. And I do believe they are well trained. I take nothing away from them, and I thank them for being willing warriors. They are called and they go, and we should never diminish them. They are our defenders. And when the Commander in Chief calls them, they respond.

And, yes, Mr. Speaker, in the times I have gone every year since we invaded Iraq, I have gone along to Afghanistan, I have been in Mazul and Tikrit, and I have spoken to soldiers, and I probably left some behind who lost their lives. And every one of them would give you a stiff upper lip. They are there. As I got to go more recently, unfortunately I would see those who are there on their second and third redeployment, and those who will go back will be on the second and third redeployment.

So Dr. King's dream is being extinguished in the bloodiness, in the misdirectedness of an ongoing war, longer than World War II, with no solution. We leave Dr. King's dream of non-violence, of ways of using nonviolence, extinguished and stomped under our feet.

So I say to the American people, Dr. King's birthday is past, it was yesterday, and we had a weekend of activities, I'm sure, in many, many cities. You won't remember it again until next year this time, but I believe we are commanded by icons like Dr. King and our own Founding Fathers who indicated first that we organize this Nation to form a more perfect Union. It is right here in the Constitution, the very document that provides for us the right kind of way to declare war, which we never did.

Then, of course, Alexander Hamilton wanted to make sure we didn't leave our democracy, our freedom, our ability to speak just on some parchment paper they had written on. He said it has to be living, and we are not living the dream or living freedom here in America today. And, America, is what I am saying to my colleagues, you voted in November, I know, but it is time to break the silence. That is what Martin King said on April 4, 1967, a year before his death. Beyond Vietnam, a time to break the silence.

That was a stepping away from Dr. King's whole legacy at that time. And, believe me, he received enormous criticism. But he said a time comes when silence is betrayal, and that time has come for us in relation to Vietnam. He even went on to say, when pressed by the demands of inner truth, men do not easily assume the task of opposing their government's policy, especially in times of war. Nor does the human spirit move without great difficulty against all the apathy of conforming thought within one's own bosom and in the surrounding world.

He said, again, it is time to break the silence. Tonight, as he spoke to the congregation in this speech, he said: However, I wish not to speak with Hanoi and the National Liberation Front, then of course our proposed enemies during Vietnam, but rather to my fellow Americans, who with me bear the greatest responsibility in ending a conflict that has exacted a heavy price on both continents.

So this is what I leave with my friends. It is the responsibility of America. It is our responsibility to end the conflict that has exacted a heavy price on both continents.

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And so I ask Americans to push forward. Let us hear from you on the cutting off of funds because, as we have heard over the weekend, the administration refuses to listen to the voices of the American people. And I was told the Vice President indicated that we have enough money, and so the Congress is not needed.

But I remain committed and inspired by Martin King's dream. And he had a wonderful dream for a better America. He wanted to see all of us of all hues and religion, little black boys and girls and white boys and girls and brown boys and girls, and all races and creeds of his era, now translated to today sitting down at the table of peace and harmony.

It may sound dated, but it is relevant today, and the New Direction Congress has grabbed hold, if you will, of the idea of making America great.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot make America great unless, of course, we bring, in dignity, the end to the Iraq conflict. 34,000 dead. And America must speak against the funding and the continued funding of this horrific, misdirected conflict.

Might I say, it has nothing to do with cutting off the resources of our valued

soldiers on the battlefield, for, as we have heard, there are monies there. But unless our voice is heard, non-violently, and comprehensively, we have a failed policy and a failed direction continued by the executive.

I close, Mr. Speaker, by citing in the Constitution the recognition that there are three branches of government, the executive, the judiciary, and the legislature. The Founding Fathers made sure, not knowing of Dr. King's dream, that they were equal and balanced.

And I respect the President as a Commander-in-Chief, but it is time now for America to breathe life into this Constitution, and to ensure, as we breathe life into this constitution, we, the people who are here to form a more perfect union, demand in debate and demand in action that we redeploy and bring our soldiers home.

And we can be successful because America has always lifted her voice of reason and brought people to the table in negotiation. And all the violence in Iraq, all of the violence in Iraq has not brought the parties together. All of the warring, all of the militia and our soldiers on the ground has not brought the parties together. That is where the administration fails in its duty to heal America and to make a solution that recognizes sectarian violence is going to require those sects to sit down and find a valid peace.

Martin King left us with good words, answer the Macedonian call to render aid, and we, as Americans, would get to the promised land some day. He might not be with us, but we have the opportunity, still, to continue our greatness and be part of the promised land.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again for your patience this evening and having given us an opportunity to remind Americans that our history is not one that is passed, but it is living. Dr. King's dream must live within us.

THREE AMERICAN HEROES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WILSON of Ohio). The gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow morning, at 7:24 a.m., the first rays of the morning sun will illuminate the markers, the crosses and Stars of David at Arlington Cemetery. And about a half hour later they will move across the oak ridges of the Blue Ridge Mountains and down to the slow waters of the Shenandoah River and across the Midwest of this country.

And, Mr. Speaker, they will arrive, about an hour later, that great American sunrise, at the small towns in Texas, the hometowns of Audie Murphy, who fought with such great heroism in World War II, Sergeant Roy Benevides, who was a hero of the Vietnam War, and the hometown of Corporal Jason Dunham, who was given, a few days ago, the Medal of Honor by the President of the United States for his extreme valor in Iraq.